AN 5.57 — Subjects for Regular Reviewing

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Text

Numbered Discourses 5.57

6. Hindrances

Subjects for Regular Reviewing

“Mendicants, a woman or a man, a layperson or a renunciate should often review these five subjects. What five?

‘I am liable to grow old, I am not exempt from old age.’ A woman or a man, a layperson or a renunciate should often review this.

‘I am liable to get sick, I am not exempt from sickness.’ …

‘I am liable to die, I am not exempt from death.’ …

‘I must be parted and separated from all I hold dear and beloved.’ …

‘I am the owner of my deeds and heir to my deeds. Deeds are my womb, my relative, and my refuge.

I shall be the heir of whatever deeds I do, whether good or bad.’ A woman or a man, a layperson or a renunciate should often review this.

What is the advantage for a woman or a man, a layperson or a renunciate of often reviewing this: ‘I am liable to grow old, I am not exempt from old age’? There are sentient beings who, intoxicated with the vanity of youth, do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. Reviewing this subject often, they entirely give up the vanity of youth, or at least reduce it. This is the advantage for a woman or a man, a layperson or a renunciate of often reviewing this: ‘I am liable to grow old, I am not exempt from old age’.

What is the advantage of often reviewing this: ‘I am liable to get sick, I am not exempt from sickness’? There are sentient beings who, drunk on the vanity of health, do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. Reviewing this subject often, they entirely give up the vanity of health, or at least reduce it. This is the advantage of often reviewing this: ‘I am liable to get sick, I am not exempt from sickness’.

What is the advantage of often reviewing this: ‘I am liable to die, I am not exempt from death’? There are sentient beings who, drunk on the vanity of life, do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. Reviewing this subject often, they entirely give up the vanity of life, or at least reduce it. This is the advantage of often reviewing this: ‘I am liable to die, I am not exempt from death’.

What is the advantage of often reviewing this: ‘I must be parted and separated from all I hold dear and beloved’? There are sentient beings who, aroused by desire and lust for their dear and beloved, do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. Reviewing this subject often, they entirely give up desire and lust for their dear and beloved, or at least reduce it. This is the advantage of often reviewing this: ‘I must be parted and separated from all I hold dear and beloved’.

What is the advantage of often reviewing like this: ‘I am the owner of my deeds and heir to my deeds. Deeds are my womb, my relative, and my refuge. I shall be the heir of whatever deeds I do, whether good or bad’? There are sentient beings who do bad things by way of body, speech, and mind. Reviewing this subject often, they entirely give up bad conduct, or at least reduce it. This is the advantage for a woman or a man, a layperson or a renunciate of often reviewing like this: ‘I am the owner of my deeds and heir to my deeds. Deeds are my womb, my relative, and my refuge. I shall be the heir of whatever deeds I do, whether good or bad.’

Then that noble disciple reflects: ‘It’s not just me who is liable to grow old, not being exempt from old age. For all sentient beings grow old according to their nature, as long as they come and go, pass away and are reborn.’ When they review this subject often, the path is born in them. They cultivate, develop, and make much of it. By doing so, they give up the fetters and eliminate the underlying tendencies.

‘It’s not just me who is liable to get sick, not being exempt from sickness. For all sentient beings get sick according to their nature, as long as they come and go, pass away and are reborn.’ When they review this subject often, the path is born in them. They cultivate, develop, and make much of it. By doing so, they give up the fetters and eliminate the underlying tendencies.

‘It’s not just me who is liable to die, not being exempt from death. For all sentient beings die according to their nature, as long as they come and go, pass away and are reborn.’ When they review this subject often, the path is born in them. They cultivate, develop, and make much of it. By doing so, they give up the fetters and eliminate the underlying tendencies.

‘It’s not just me who must be parted and separated from all I hold dear and beloved. For all sentient beings must be parted and separated from all they hold dear and beloved, as long as they come and go, pass away and are reborn.’ When they review this subject often, the path is born in them. They cultivate, develop, and make much of it. By doing so, they give up the fetters and eliminate the underlying tendencies.

‘It’s not just me who shall be the owner of my deeds and heir to my deeds. For all sentient beings shall be the owners of their deeds and heirs to their deeds, as long as they come and go, pass away and are reborn.’ When they review this subject often, the path is born in them. They cultivate, develop, and make much of it. By doing so, they give up the fetters and eliminate the underlying tendencies.

For others, sickness is natural,

and so are old age and death.

Though this is how their nature is,
ordinary people feel disgusted.
If I were to be disgusted
with creatures whose nature is such,
it would not be appropriate for me,
since my life is just the same.
Living in such a way,
I understood the truth without attachments.
I mastered all vanities—
of health, of youth,
and even of life—
seeing renunciation as sanctuary.
Zeal sprang up in me
as I looked to extinguishment.
Now I’m unable
to indulge in sensual pleasures;
there’s no turning back,
I’m committed to the spiritual life.”